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SUBJECT: CONSOLIDATION PROGRESS IN FORMER FARC STRONGHOLD IMPRESSIVE,  
BUT SECURITY GAINS TENUOUS

REF: 09 BOGOTA 2334; 09 BOGOTA 2786; 08 BOGOTA 3547

1. (SBU) Summary: Despite notable progress, including marked gains in public security, reduction of coca cultivation, and winning support of the local population for governmental institutions, the overall situation is fragile in the Macarena area of Meta Department -- the former heartland of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the focus of the Government of Colombia's (GOC) Plan for the Integrated Consolidation of the Macarena (PCIM). "Success" in the Macarena will be scrutinized carefully since the PCIM is the model for intervention in other priority areas under Colombia's National Consolidation Plan (PNC) and has been touted as a counterinsurgency model for other countries in conflict. While security and citizen confidence in the national government have improved, Macarena residents and leaders cite remaining challenges in transitioning to the licit economy: land titling issues, deteriorated or non-existent tertiary roads, and a lack of access to credit and resources. PCIM officials and Colombian military commanders have noted the void created in the wake of military clearing operations, especially the lack of police presence, and the slow pace of the government to establish a meaningful civilian presence in newly consolidated areas. Government action has lagged behind rhetoric about the need to establish state presence. Embassy Bogota is positioned to help the GOC address many of the significant challenges facing the PCIM and other key zones through Post's Colombian Strategic Development Initiative. Post has also developed an engagement strategy with key GOC stakeholders over the next month to focus civilian agency attention on consolidation, including the PCIM. End Summary.

2. (SBU) On December 14, NAS, USAID, and MILGP representatives visited former FARC strongholds Cano Amarillo and Puerto Rico, communities qualified as "in transition" under the PCIM. While these areas have made tangible and significant progress, GOC consolidation leaders emphasized the delicacy of the overall situation and the need for continued progress. In Cano Amarillo -- a hamlet retaken from the FARC approximately a year ago -- local residents and leaders raised concerns about challenges facing consolidation and difficulties in transitioning to the licit economy. Unless the GOC addresses the significant challenges

facing the PCIM, these problems may negatively impact the Embassy's Colombian Strategic Development Initiative.

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#### PCIM as a Counterinsurgency Model

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¶3. (U) Beginning in 2007, the GOC, under Ministry of Defense leadership and with USG support, initiated the PCIM, a pilot program to increase state presence in the Macarena region of Meta -- six municipal counties which were long a stronghold of the FARC. The three PCIM coordinators (civilian, army, and police) act as interlocutors with local, regional, and national government counterparts, theoretically working together to ensure that the clear/hold/build phases of consolidation unfold in a coordinated and sequenced fashion. The military first establishes permanent security for communities and then transitions security responsibilities to the police while civilian institutions create state presence through a range of government services including education, health care, and infrastructure projects.

¶4. (SBU) The Colombian government used the PCIM model to create the PNC. Regional coordination center (RCC) coordinators responsible for consolidating other priority regions have visited the PCIM to draw lessons and the PCIM civilian coordinator has advised other RCCs. Representatives from across the USG, including from the missions in Panama, Mexico, Afghanistan, Paraguay, and other countries, have met with PCIM staff. Perceived PCIM success to date has also attracted the interest of the governments of Holland and Germany -- both of whom are financing aspects of PCIM programming.

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#### Stronger Participation of Civilian Agencies Needed in PCIM

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¶5. (SBU) The lag in effective participation of civilian ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, and other actors undermines the PCIM model of integrated state action. As the consolidation process progresses, better civilian coordination and high-level commitment from GOC civilian agencies are essential to ensure the delivery of state services to communities that are embracing the state as the legitimate authority for the first time. The current ad hoc inter-institutional process will result in poorly coordinated interventions that lack a long-term, structural impact.

¶6. (SBU) Some of the challenges civilian government agencies face to effectively participate in the PCIM include rigid bureaucratic processes and the inability to adapt to fast changing conditions on the ground. Additional funding for socio-economic programs is needed and existing programs need more flexibility to be able to respond quickly to take advantage of expanding spaces of security and eradication. Post is encouraging the GOC to deepen civilian agency commitment and improve upon steps taken to date, which include a demonstrated prioritization of consolidation zones in the 2010 budget for the Agency for Social Action and a two day conference this month convoked by the National Planning Department to identify the totality of existing GOC programming as well as programming gaps throughout the consolidation zones.

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## Security Improves, but Police Presence Lacking

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17. (SBU) Colombian public security forces have made impressive gains in the PCIM's area of operations, pushing the FARC out of key population centers and surrounding areas and winning the confidence of citizenry who now openly collaborate with government consolidation efforts. Despite these advances, security gains are tenuous. Area military commanders point to severe limitations posed by their constitutional inability to act as "civilian" law enforcement officials in matters not related to terrorism or armed conflict, and tout the need for additional police presence in the

area. As in other areas of Colombia, the FARC is adapting to the increased security presence by employing small, mobile units of 5-10 guerrillas, often in civilian attire. These groups are difficult to identify and move into rural communities to exert pressure, extort businesses, gather intelligence, and provide logistical support for FARC units that are increasingly isolated from population centers. Instead of engaging Colombian security forces directly, the FARC is increasing its use of anti-personnel mines and improvised explosive devices to inflict damage.

18. (SBU) The transition of security responsibility from the military to the police -- a key element of consolidation -- continues to lag in the PCIM. The Colombian National Police has established two new police stations in towns outside the municipal capitals as a result of the consolidation effort. They also plan to build two more stations by 2011. Nonetheless, overall police presence is limited in transition zones and lags behind military clearing operations. In the absence of a robust police presence, common crime is reportedly on the rise in areas of previous FARC influence. The potential for the emergence of organized drug trafficking groups operating in areas adjacent to the PCIM is also a concern. Until the Colombian National Police is able to budget enough resources to expand and staff permanent bases outside of the municipal capitals, permanent security will be elusive.

19. (SBU) Recently, the Fiscalía (the Colombian Prosecutor General equivalent) assigned a special prosecutor and two investigators to the PCIM's RCC in Vista Hermosa. The special prosecutor is tasked to investigate crimes in the PCIM related to terrorism and narco-trafficking. Despite this important support -- which took nearly two years of lobbying to secure -- mobility within the PCIM presents challenges to investigation efforts. Attempts to use virtual courtrooms have been stymied by the legal requirement that the accused be physically represented by counsel, an impossible task given the absence of public defenders in the zone.

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## Economic Development Challenges

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110. (SBU) Improved security conditions and a significant drop in coca cultivation have spurred the transition to legal economic activities in the Macarena. Long-term crops such as cacao, rubber, coffee, and African Palm have demonstrated potential as suitable alternatives to coca cultivation and drivers of sustainable economic growth. Despite improved conditions, remaining obstacles to lasting economic development include deteriorated tertiary

roads, poor market access for locally-produced products, lack of credit, and the need for more government and private sector engagement.

¶11. (SBU) Notwithstanding the region's relative proximity to Bogota, the country's largest domestic market, inadequate infrastructure in the Macarena region limits local farmer access to markets. Under the PCIM, tertiary road and bridge construction prioritizes linking rural communities to markets and increasing access to government services. To improve the region's tertiary roadways and market access for rural farmers, the GOC must improve roads and bridges and undertake new construction.

¶12. (U) The creation of rapid income-generating opportunities to replace lost income from the coca economy and lack of credit for small farmers also present challenges to economic growth in the PCIM. The GOC, in collaboration with international donors including USAID, have initiated pilot programs to address income and food security needs post-eradication. Short-term food subsidy programs encourage rural families to remain in the area, but they do not represent a sustainable livelihood strategy for families in the Macarena. For many rural farmers, credit is needed to purchase essential farming inputs and equipment, make capital investments in their farms, and pay day laborers. The problem is more severe for former coca growers who often received financing from the FARC to grow illicit crops and earned frequent cash payments for their coca. USAID is working with the GOC's Opportunities Bank policy program and the Colombian banking sector to encourage expansion of microfinance services to rural areas such as the PCIM.

¶13. (SBU) Involvement of other government agencies and the private sector is critical for the success of economic development activities in the region. Under the Progreso program, USAID has helped the PCIM establish productive roundtables in the Macarena region that bring together government institutions, the private sector, and farmers' associations to discuss productive activities in the region. While linkages have been developed between departmental-level agencies, the private sector, and local producers to provide resources and economic development activities, more needs to be done to engage the central government, and the Ministries of Agriculture and Commerce in particular, to improve small-scale farming.

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Lack of Progress on Land Titling  
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¶14. (SBU) An unexpected result of the dramatic security improvements in much of the Macarena region has been skyrocketing property values. Consolidation staff report that small property land values have increased 14-fold in two years in some PCIM areas, attributable to better security. This inflation in land prices may expose farmers without land title to conflict and competition for land from large land owners and outside investors seeking to capitalize on the emerging economic opportunities in the region. There have also been anecdotal reports that major drug traffickers have sent emissaries to buy land in and around the PCIM, and small farmers run the risk of being pushed out by this land grab.

¶15. (SBU) Accelerated land titling is one solution to this conflict, yet inefficient land titling is a major challenge and a contentious issue in the PCIM. According to the civilian coordinator, no small farmers have received title to property in the PCIM since consolidation efforts began. Complex bureaucratic rules governing land titling in Colombia often discourage small

land holders from pursuing their claims. In addition, many residents in the region reside within territory designated for special environmental management due to proximity to three national parks. This designation includes the requirement that claims be accompanied by an environmental management plan, a daunting task for small-scale farmers. USAID is supporting GOC efforts to reform

the land policy framework, including titling procedures, restitution, communal territories, and protected areas. The changes currently being proposed would greatly facilitate resolution of the issues mentioned above, not only in PCIM, but for the other consolidation areas as well. Some PCIM residents face additional hurdles to land ownership as Colombian law prohibits former coca farmers from legally obtaining title to their land for five years after growing coca.

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Coca Cultivation Down  
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¶16. (U) The United Nations reported that coca cultivation in the PCIM was down 73 percent in 2008 compared to 2007, evidence that consolidation and eradication efforts have been successful in reducing coca cultivation there (Ref A). But the progress must be seen in the broad context of continued FARC resilience. The FARC-controlled region in the southern PCIM bordering the Macarena National Park is still a significant coca cultivation area and poses security issues for manual eradicators. In July 2009, PCIM officials, citing security concerns and the relatively small amounts of licit agriculture in the southern PCIM, requested aerial eradication operations to cut off an important source of revenue for the FARC (Ref B). The request came over a year after a large part of the PCIM was declared off limits to spray to accommodate consolidation efforts and to implement an ambitious voluntary eradication program (Ref C). Recently, PCIM officials requested a second round of aerial eradication for mid-January to combat replanting efforts following spray operations in August.

¶17. (SBU) Coca eradication in the PCIM has largely been successful, but challenges remain. PCIM officials acknowledge that voluntary and forced manual eradication programs in some parts of the PCIM are impossible to implement due to anticipated violence by the FARC against eradication teams and participating communities. In safer PCIM transition zones, lack of funding for small-scale eradication operations has left behind small pockets of coca that undermine lasting eradication and perpetuate a culture of illegality.

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Comment  
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¶18. (SBU) The PCIM has shown that improved security brings significant ancillary benefits, as shown by increased land prices in the region as a consequence of citizen security. While challenges continue to face the PCIM, they are not insurmountable. Post is watching to see if the recent departure of Vice Minister of Defense Sergio Jaramillo, a major proponent of the PCIM model, results in less attention and urgency from Bogota on the success of consolidation in the Macarena. On the other hand, the arrival of a more operational official to replace Jaramillo might well lead to progress on operational challenges such as those cited in this message. Jaramillo's replacement, Jorge Mario Eastman, appears to

have embraced his role as co-chair of the consolidation process and

to recognize the significance of the consolidation plan in the national context. With elections and a possible government transition looming, the GOC may grow distracted with the PCIM model in 2010, and Embassy Bogota is working to prevent this. Embassy Bogota has developed an engagement strategy with key GOC stakeholders over the next month to cultivate VMOD Eastman's interest in the PCIM and to increase the focus of civilian agency attention on consolidation. Consolidation efforts have generated high expectations among communities for the transformation of the Macarena region. Fulfilling these expectations is crucial to PCIM success and progress of the Embassy's Colombian Strategic Development Initiative in the Macarena and beyond.

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